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CONFESSIO JUVENIS

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# CONFESSIO JUVENIS

COLLECTED POEMS

*By*

RICHARD HUGHES



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CHATTO AND WINDUS

LONDON

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# Contents

## NUMERI BALBUTIENTES

Invocation to the Muse	<i>page</i> 9
Explanation, on Coming Home Late	10
To Miss Catherine Pye, etc.	11
Poets, Painters, Puddings	12
The Ballad of Benjamin Crocker	14

## CONFESSIO JUVENIS

### PASSUS I

Tramp	21
The Horse-trough	23
Weald	24
Judy	26
The Ruin	27
Gratitude	28
The Walking Road	30
The Singing Furies	32
Gipsy-Night	34
The Image	35
Winter	36
Storm : to the Theme of Polyphemus	37
The Moonlit Journey	40

### PASSUS II

The Bird's-Nester	43
The Jumping-bean	45



Lament of a Trimmer	<i>page</i> 46
Isaac Ball	47
The Rolling Saint	49
Old Cat Care	52
Glaucopis	53
The Broken Wing	54
The Sermon	55

#### PASSUS III

Lover Finds Something Out	59
Reply to Good Advice	60
Lament for Gaza	61
Moonstruck	62
Ænigma	64
The Bird	65
Felo de se	67

#### PASSUS IV

Elephant and Roc	71
Unicorn Mad	77
Meditative Ode	82
Ecstatic Ode	86
Time	89
When Shall I see Gold ?	90
Travel-Piece	91

**NUMERI  
BALBUTIENTES**



## INVOCATION TO THE MUSE

FAIR maiden, fair maiden,  
Come spin for me:  
Come spin till you're laden,  
Though hard it may be.

'Tis an honour and glory  
To be a king's maid,  
Though (I'll not tell a story)  
You won't be well paid.

*Aetat. 6*

EXPLANATION,  
ON COMING HOME LATE

WE went down to the river's brink  
To of those clear waters drink,  
Where the fishes, gold and red,  
Ever quickly past us sped,

And the pebbles, red and blue,  
Which we saw the green weeds through  
At the bottom shining lay:  
It was their shining made us stay.

*Aetat. 7*

To  
MISS CATHERINE PYE,  
SCHOOLMISTRESS, WITH A GARLAND OF IVY,  
ON HER BIRTHDAY

OH mistress of my younger years,  
Accept this garland green  
And place it on thy comely head—  
A crownèd birthday queen:

May Bacchus' plant bring Bacchus' joy  
With cheerful singing sounds:  
Thy happiness know no alloy,  
Thy pleasure know no bounds.

*Aetat. 10*

## POETS, PAINTERS, PUDDINGS

POETS, painters, and puddings; these three  
Make up the World as it ought to be.

Poets make faces  
And sudden grimaces:  
They twit you, and spit you  
On words: then admit you  
To heaven or hell  
By the tales that they tell.

Painters are gay  
As young rabbits in May:  
They buy jolly mugs,  
Bowls, pictures, and jugs:  
The things round their necks  
Are lively with checks,  
(For they like something red  
As a frame for the head):  
Or they'll curse you with oaths,  
That tear holes in your clothes.  
(With nothing to mend them  
You'd best not offend them.)

Puddings should be  
Full of currants, for me:  
Boiled in a pail,  
Tied in the tail

Of an old bleached shirt:  
So hot that they hurt,  
So huge that they last  
From the dim distant past  
Until the crack of doom  
Lift the roof off the room.

Poets, painters, and puddings; these three  
Crown the day as it crowned should be.

*Aetat.?*



## THE BALLAD OF BENJAMIN CROCKER

BENJAMIN CROCKER in sixteen-three  
(Here's to the Devil in flaming rum!)  
Made his fifth voyage to West Carribee  
(Drink to the Devil, man, and don't look glum!)  
Fierce was his scowl, and his skin tanned red,  
And a knotted silk kerchief covered his head  
That was scarred with ivory, steel and lead:  
He wore three knives, and a cutlass, too,  
To slit the gullets of men of thew:  
Or his thumbs could strangle a whole ship's crew:  
—Here's to the Devil and his jolly chum!

Benjamin Crocker touched Brazil  
(Drink to his health in ancient rum!)  
To victual his ship on dried guatil  
(Drink to the Devil till your tongue's burnt dumb!)  
And melons, and capec, and Roger-ho,  
And Sapagoril from Madago,  
And grey-green porpoises dried in a row:  
All about on the beach lay his crew, every one  
Drinking neat rum in the scorching sun  
Till the sky turned black and the sea turned dun:  
(Come, my poppet, a noggin of rum!)

For the folk that voyaged with Bloody Ben  
(Drink to the Devil in golden rum!)  
Were none of them squeamish sort of men:  
(Drink till your toes begin to hum!)  
So the skipper started him off alone,  
To seek strange toys for his sweetheart, Joan,  
—Butterflies, gew-gaws of gold or bone:  
At his fierce approach the Carribs fled,  
And flung small darts at his gawdy head:  
But he winged a few, and then kicked them dead,  
And swigged a pull at his flask of rum.

Old Gal-gar-ul sat and basked in the heat  
(Fill your brain with Jamaica rum)  
And mummled strips of tough dried meat:  
(Drink, man, drink till the Grey Rats come!)  
In her small shadow the bright eyes shone  
Of a black beast hobbling, one leg gone,  
And never a paw to stand upon:  
She babbled a speech of ancient men,  
Without wit or strength to run from Ben:  
He snapped her bones like a dry quill pen:  
—Here, sweet chuck, with another of rum!

He burnt the place, and he took away  
(Warm your guts with a soak of rum!)  
A small green flute for his child to play  
(Drink, till the New Jerusalum!)  
And a scented idol of smooth hard wood,  
And knotted strings, and a feather hood  
—Things he hardly understood.  
And horny knives, of a strange device,

And things ill-gotten, above all price:  
Ear-rings, nose rings: gone in a trice:  
And slaked his thirst with a draught of rum.

Then he sought his mates and ship so trim:  
—Praised be old Nick for the gift of rum!  
But a black beast hobbled after him,  
And he knew it not, being well in rum:  
He reached his ship as the sun went down:  
His men lay awash from toe to crown  
In the cooling tide: for you cannot drown  
If you are full to the gills inside:  
You sleep it off: so he let them bide,  
Snoring like porpoises, drunk to the wide,  
And went below for a tot of rum.

There, below, on a pile of kegs  
(Brandy, Canary, and a Cyprus drum)  
A black thing swiffled upon three legs:  
He shrieked, and felt his knees go numb,  
And fell, and cracked his burning head,  
And cursed and clutched in his reeling dread. . . .  
Next day they found the Captain dead  
In thick green bilge, without nose or lip,  
His entrails plastered across his hip,  
In a mess of blood where a foot might slip,  
And an oozy track where the Thing had come.

They trussed him, and slung him, and made much revel,  
Boozing away till kingdom come,  
With pirate chaunties, hymns to the Devil,  
Well washed down with a draught of rum:

They slung him over to Davy Jones  
Who now has charge of his gawky bones;  
And they weighed him down with round white stones,  
For fear that the spirit he had in his head  
Should cause him to rise too soon from the dead,  
And gibber, and float, and foul the lead  
—So here's to the Devil, lad, in good old Rum!

*Aetat. ?*



# CONFESSIO JUVENIS

## *Passus I*



## TRAMP

(THE BATH ROAD, JUNE)

WHEN a brass sun staggers above the sky,  
When feet cleave to boots, and the tongue's dry,  
And sharp dust goads the rolling eye  
Come thoughts of wine, and dancing thoughts of girls:  
They shiver their white arms, and the head whirls,  
And noon light is hid in their dark curls:  
Then noon feet stumble, and head swims,  
Till out shines the sun, and the thought dims;  
And death, for blood, runs in the weak limbs.

To fall on flints in the shade of tall nettles  
Gives easy sleep as a bed of rose petals,  
And dust drifting from the highway  
As light a coverlet as down may.  
The myriad feet of many-sized flies  
May not open those tired eyes.

But the first wind of night  
Twitches the coverlet away quite:  
The first wind, and large first rain,  
Flickers the dry pulse to life again,  
Flickers the lids burning on the eyes:  
Come sudden flashes of the slipping skies:  
Hunger, oldest visionary,  
Hides a devil in a tree,



Hints a glory in the clouds,  
Fills the crooked air with crowds  
Of ivory sightless demons singing—  
Eyes start: straightens back:  
Limbs stagger and crack:  
But brain flies, brain soars  
Up, where the Sky roars  
Upon the backs of cherubim:  
Brain rockets up to Him.  
Body gives another twist  
To the slack waist-band;  
In agony clenches fist  
Till the nails bite the hand.  
Body floats light as air,  
With rain in its sparse hair.

Brain returns ; and he would tell  
The things he had seen well:  
But Body will not stir his lips:  
So Mind and Body come to grips  
And deadly each hates the other  
As his treacherous blood-brother.

Yet no sight, no sound shows  
How the struggle goes.

I sink at last faint in the wet gutter;  
So many words to speak that the tongue cannot utter.

## THE HORSE - TROUGH

CLOUDS of children round the trough  
Splash and clatter in the sun:  
Their clouted shoes are mostly off,  
And some are quarrelling, and one  
Cools half her face, nose downward bubbling,  
Wetting her clothes and never troubling;  
Bobble, bobble, bobble there  
Till bubbles like young earthquakes heave  
The orange island of her hair,  
And tidal waves run up her sleeve;  
Another 's tanned as brown as bistre;  
Another ducks his little sister,  
And all are mixed in such a crowd  
And tell their separate joys so loud  
That who can be this silent one,  
This dimpled, pensive, baby one?  
—She sits the sunny steps so still  
For hours, trying hard to kill  
One fly at least of those that buzz  
So cannily. . . .

And then she does.

## WEALD

STILL is the leaden night:  
The film-eyed moon  
Spills hardly any light,  
But nods to sleep. And soon  
Through five broad parishes there is no sound  
But the far melancholy wooing  
Of evil-minded cats; and the late shoeing  
Of some unlucky filly by the ford.

For twenty miles abroad there is no moving,  
But for the uncomfortable hooving  
Of midnight cows a-row in Parson's Lag;  
—That; and the slow twist of water round a snag.

The silver mist that slumbers in the hollow  
Dreams of a breeze, and turns upon its side,  
So sleeps uneasy: but no breezes follow,  
Only the moon blinks slowly thrice, wan-eyed.  
I think this is the most unhappy night  
Since hot-cheeked Hecuba wept up the dawn:  
There never was a more unhappy night,  
Not that when Hero's lamp proved unavailing,  
Nor that when Bethlehem was filled with wailing.

There is no reason for unhappiness,  
Save that the saddened stars have hid their faces,

And that dun clouds usurp their brilliant places,  
And that the wind lacks even strength to sigh.

And yet, as if outraged by some long tune  
A dog cries dolefully, green-eyed in the moon.

## JUDY

(LANDSCAPE WITH HORSE, &C.)

SAND hot to my haunches,  
The sun beats my eyes down—  
Yet they peer under lashes  
At the hill's crown:

See how the hill slants  
Up the sky half way;  
Over the top tall clouds  
Poke, gold and grey.

Down: see a green field  
Tipped on its short edge,  
Its upper rim straggled round  
By a black hedge.

Grass bright as new brass:  
Uneven dark gorse  
Stuck to its own shadow ;  
Like Judy, that black horse.

Birds clatter numberless,  
And the breeze tells  
That bean-flower somewhere  
Has ousted the blue-bells:

Birds clatter numberless:  
And in the muffled wood  
Big feet move slowly:  
Mean no good.

## THE RUIN

GONE are the coloured princes, gone echo, gone laughter :  
Drips the blank roof : and the moss creeps after.

Dead is the crumbled chimney : all mellowed to rotting  
The wall-tints, and the floor-tints, from the spotting  
Of the rain, from the wind and slow appetite  
Of patient mould : and of the worms that bite  
At beauty all their innumerable lives.

—But the sudden nip of knives,  
The lady aching for her stiffening lord,  
The passionate-fearful bride,  
And beaded Pallor clamped to the torment-board,  
Leave they no ghosts, no memories by the stairs?  
No sheeted glimmer treading floorless ways?  
No haunting melody of lovers' airs,  
Nor stealthy chill upon the noon of days?

No : for the dead and senseless walls have long forgotten  
What passionate hearts beneath the grass lie rotten.

Only from roofs and chimneys pleasantly sliding  
'Tumbles the rain in the early hours :  
Patters its thousand feet on the flowers,  
Cools its small grey feet in the grasses.

## GRATITUDE

*Eternal gratitude*—a long, thin word:  
When meant, oftenest left unheard:  
When light on the tongue, light in the purse too;  
Of curious metallurgy: when coined true  
It glitters not, is neither large nor small:  
More worth than rubies—less, times, than a ball.  
Not gift, nor willed: yet through its wide range  
Buys what it buys exact, and leaves no change.

Old Gurney had it, won on a hot day  
With ale, from a glib-voiced Gipsy by the way.  
He held it lightly: for 'twas a rum start  
To find a hedgeling who had still a heart:  
So put it down for twist of a beggar's tongue.  
*He* had not felt the heat: how the dust stung  
A face June-roasted: *he* saw not the look  
Aslant the gift-mug; how the hand shook.  
Yet the words filled his head, and he grew merry  
And whistled from the Boar to Wryebrook ferry,  
And chaffed the ferryman when the hawser creaked,  
Or slipping bilge showed where the planks leaked;  
—Lent hand himself, till doubly hard the barge  
Butted its nose in mud of the farther marge.  
When Gurney leapt to shore he found—dismay!  
He had no tuppence—(Tuppence was to pay  
To sulky Ferryman.)—"Naught have I," says he,  
"Naught but the gratitude of Tammas Lee

Given one hour.”—Sulky Charon grinned:  
“ Done,” said he, “ done: I take it—all of it, mind.”  
“ Done,” cries Jan Gurney. Down the road he went,  
But by the ford left all his merriment.

That is the tale of midday chaffering:  
How Charon took, and Gurney lost the thing.  
Then Charon gave it for his youngest daughter  
To a tall lad who saved her out of the water  
(Being old and mean, he had none of his own to give,  
So passed on Tammas’s, glad to see her live):  
Then the young farmer paid his quarter’s rent  
With that one coin, when all else was spent,  
And the Squire kept it, for some goldless debt . . .  
For aught *I* know, it wanders current yet.

But Tammas was no angel in disguise:  
He stole Squire’s chickens—often: he told lies,  
Robbed Charon’s garden, burnt young Farmer’s ricks  
And played the village many lousy tricks.

No children sniffled, and no dog cried,  
When full of oaths and smells, he died.



## THE WALKING ROAD

THE World is all orange-round:  
The sea smells salt between:  
The strong hills climb on their own backs,  
Coloured and damascene,  
Cloud-flecked and sunny-green;  
Knotted and straining up,  
Up, with still hands and cold:  
Grip at the slipping sky,  
Yet cannot hold:  
Round twists old Earth, and round,  
Stillness not yet found.

Plains like a flat dish, too,  
Shudder and spin:  
Roads in a pattern crawl  
Scratched with a pin  
Across the fields' dim shagreen:  
—Dusty their load:  
But over the craggy hills  
Wanders the walking road.

Broad as the hill's broad,  
Rough as the world's rough, too:  
Long as the Age is long,  
Ancient and true,  
Swinging, and broad, and long,  
Craggy, strong.

Gods sit like milestones  
On the edge of the Road, by the Moon's sill;  
Man has feet, feet that swing, pound the high hill  
Above and above, until  
He stumble and widely spill  
His dusty bones.

Round twists old Earth, and round,  
Stillness not yet found.

## THE SINGING FURIES

THE yellow sky grows vivid as the sun:  
The sea glittering, and the hills dun.

The stones quiver. Twenty pounds of lead  
Fold upon fold, the air laps my head.

Both eyes scorch: tongue stiff and bitter:  
Flies buzz, but no birds twitter:  
Slow bullocks stand with stinging feet,  
And naked fishes scarcely stir, for heat.

White as smoke,  
As jetted steam, dead clouds awoke  
And quivered on the Western rim.  
Then the singing started: dim  
And sibilant as rime-stiff reeds  
That whistle as the wind leads.  
The North answered, low and clear;  
The South whispered hard and sere,  
And thunder muffled up like drums  
Beat, whence the East wind comes.  
The heavy sky that could not weep  
Is loosened: rain falls steep,  
And thirty singing furies ride  
To split the sky from side to side.

They sing, and lash the wet-flanked wind :  
Sing, from Col to Hafod Mynd  
And fling their voices half a score  
Of miles along the mounded shore :  
Whip loud music from a tree,  
And roll their pæan out to sea  
Where crowded breakers fling and leap,  
And strange things throb five fathoms deep.

The sudden tempest roared and died :  
The singing furies muted ride  
Down wet and slippery roads to hell :  
And, silent in their captors' train  
Two fishers, storm-caught on the main ;  
A shepherd, battered with his flocks ;  
A pit-boy tumbled from the rocks ;  
A dozen back-broke gulls, and hosts  
Of shadowy, small, pathetic ghosts ;  
Of mice and leverets caught by flood,  
Their beauty shrouded in cold mud.

## GIPSY - NIGHT

WHEN the feet of the rain tread a dance on the roofs,  
And the wind slides through the rocks and the trees,  
And Dobbin has stabled his hoofs  
In the warm bracken-litter, noisy about his knees;  
And when there is no moon, and the sodden clouds slip over;  
Whenever there is no moon, and the rain drips cold,  
And folk with a shilling of money are bedded in houses,  
And pools of water glitter on Farmer's mould;  
Then pity Sally's girls, with the rain in their blouses:  
Martha and Johnnie, who have no money:  
The small naked puppies who whimper against the bitches,  
The small sopping children who creep to the ditches.

But when the moon is run like a red fox  
Cover to cover behind the skies;  
And the breezes crack in the trees on the rocks,  
Or stoop to flutter about the eyes  
Of one who dreams in the scent of pines  
At ease:  
Then would you not go foot it with Sarah's girls  
In and out the trees?  
Or listen across the fire  
To old Tinker-Johnnie, and Martha his Rawnee,  
In jagged Wales, or in orchard Worcestershire?

*To Pamela Bianco, 1919.*

## THE IMAGE

DIM the light in your faces: be passionless in the room.  
Snuffed are the tapers, and bitterly hang on the flowerless air:  
See: and this is the image of her they will lay in the tomb;  
Clear, and waxen, and cooled in the mass of her hair.

Quiet the tears in your voices: feel lightly, finger, for finger  
In love: then see how like is the image, but lifelessly fashioned  
And sightless, calm, unloving. Who is the Artist? Linger  
And ponder whither has flitted his sitter impassioned.

## W I N T E R

SNOW wind-whipt to ice  
Under a hard sun :  
Stream-runnels curdled hoar  
Crackle, cannot run.

Robin stark dead on twig,  
Song stiffened in it :  
Fluffed feathers may not warm  
Bone-thin linnet :

Big-eyed rabbit, lost,  
Scrabbles the snow,  
Searching for long-dead grass  
With frost-bit toe :

Mad-tired on the road  
Old Kelly goes ;  
Through crookt fingers snuffs the air  
Knife-cold in his nose.

Hunger-weak, snow-dazzled,  
Old Thomas Kelly  
Thrusts his bit hands, for warmth,  
"Twixt waistcoat and belly.

S T O R M:  
T O T H E T H E M E O F P O L Y P H E M U S

MORTAL I stand upon the lifeless hills  
That jut their cragged bones against the sky:  
I crawl upon their naked ebony  
And toil across the scars of Titan ills  
Dealt by the weaponing of gods and devils:  
I climb their uppermost deserted levels,  
And see how Heaven glowers his one eye  
Blood-red and black-browed in the sullen sky,  
While all his face is livid as a corpse  
And wicked as a snake's: see how he warps  
His sultry beam across the misted sea,  
As if he grudged its darkling ministry.

He looks so covetous, I think he hides  
—Jetsam of the slow ethereal tides—  
Some cursed and battered Sailor of the Spheres:  
All night he ravens on him and his peers,  
But with the day he straddles monstrously  
Across the earth in churlish shepherdry,  
A-hungred for his hideous nightly feast.

But storms are gathering in the whitened East:  
The day grows darker still, and suddenly  
That lone and crafty Prisoner of the Sky  
Plunges his murky torch in Heaven's Eye:



The blinded, screaming tempest trumpets out  
His windy agonies: Oh he will spout  
His boiling rains upon the soggy air  
And heave great rocking planets: he will tear  
And snatch the screeching comets by the hair  
To fling them all about him in the sea,  
And blast the wretch's fatal Odyssey!

The great convulsions of the Deity  
Rumble in agony across the sky:  
His thunders rattle in and out the peaks:  
His lightnings jab at every word He speaks:  
—At every heavenly curse the cloud is split  
And daggered lightnings crackle out of it.

Like a steep shower of snakes the hissing rain  
Flickers its tongues upon the muddied plain,  
Writhing and twisting on the gutted rocks  
That tremble at the heavy thunder-shocks:  
Soon from the hub on Heaven's axle-tree  
The frozen hail flies spinning, and the sea,  
Is lashed beneath me to a howling smoke  
As if the frozen fires of hell had woke  
And cracked their icy flames in the face of Heaven.

Withered and crouching and scarce breathing even,  
And battered as a gnat upon a wall  
I cling and gasp—climb to my feet, and fall,  
And crawl at last beneath a lidded stone,  
Careless if all the earth's foundations groan

And strain in the heaving of this devilry:  
Careless at last whether I live or die.

\*

So the vast Aeschylean tragedy  
Rolls to its thunderous appointed close:  
With final mutterings each actor goes:  
And the huge Heavenly tragedian  
Tears from his face the massy mask and wan,  
And shines resplendent on the shattered stage  
As he has done from age to bewildered age,  
Giving the lie to all his mimic rage.

## THE MOONLIT JOURNEY

UNGUARDED stands the shuttered sky:  
The creeping thief of Night  
With tool and hook begins to ply  
His careful picking: he would pry,  
And filch her coffered light.  
The soundless tapping of his bar  
Pricks out each sudden star.

The soundless tapping of his bar  
Lets out the wealthy Moon:  
The frozen Bright goes arching far  
On buttresses of lucid spar  
And lights the road to Cloun;  
And all the pouring of her riches  
Floats on the silent ditches.

The crescent road is ivory  
Between the silver water:  
But squat and black and creeping, see,  
Blank as the shadow of a tree,  
Old Robert and his daughter  
Toil on: and fearful, each descries  
Moon-gleams in other's eyes.

## *Passus II*



## THE BIRD'S-NESTER

A MEMORIAL, FOR AN UNFORTUNATE YOUNG MAN,  
EXPULSED FROM HIS UNIVERSITY  
FOR A DARING NEOLOGISM

CRITIC, that hoary Gull, in air  
Whistles, whistles shrilly:  
Climbing Youth, beware  
Murder and mockery!

That wheeling, hoary gull  
Bats on his thin skull,  
Claws at his steady eyes,  
Whinnies and cries:  
Youth flings the gibe back.  
Hundreds of wings clack,  
Bright eyes encircle, search  
For foothold's fatal lurch.  
" See now he shifts his grip:  
" Loosen each finger-tip!  
" Whew, brothers, shall he slip? "  
Crack-tendoned, answers Youth:  
" I seek for Eggs of Truth."

Claws clutch his hair,  
Beaks prick his eyes—  
" Whistle, *Despair*, *Despair*!  
" With ancient quills prise  
" Every hand's—foot's—hold,  
" Wedged in the rock's fold!  
" Batter and scream, bewilder

“ This impious babel-buil . . .

whew!

“ Down he is rocketing falling, twisting.”

For days and nights  
Time's curly breakers  
Winnow him, wash him.

What is that stirs?  
What wing from the heights  
Slants to that murdered limb?  
Gull's peering eye hath spotted  
Something the sea has rotted.  
Secretly to the feast  
Dives big gull, less, and least;  
For Age never dies:  
Age shall pick out his eyes,  
Taste them with critick zest,  
—Age knows the Best!  
—Age shall build his lair  
Out of his hair:  
Gulp his small splintered bones  
To his gizzard, for stones:  
Feed on his words  
All his young woolly birds.  
Say not he died in vain!  
All that he cried in pain  
Ear-cocked Age hearkens to  
Someday. Declares it true  
Someday.

What though he fell? The jest  
Feathers old Critic's nest.

THE JUMPING-BEAN  
A MEMORIAL, FOR ANOTHER

SUN in a warm streak  
Striping the plush:  
Catch breath, hold finger tight:  
All delight hush.

Dance, small grey thing  
Sleek in the warm sun:  
Roll around, to this, to that,  
—Rare wormy fun!

Hot sun applauds thee:  
Warm fingers press  
To wake the small life within  
Thy rotund dress.

Alack! Have years in cupboard,  
In chill and dark,  
Stifled thy discontent?  
Snufft thy spark?

Liest thou stark, stiff,  
There in thy bed?  
*Weep then a dirge for him:*  
*Poor Bean's dead!*



## LAMENT OF A TRIMMER

I AM not hot (unless the ice be hot :)  
I am not cold (unless the fire be so :)  
I am no Celt (or Celts say I am not :)  
I am no Saxon, that at least I know !  
Poet am I ? Then why this dumb dismay ?  
Or Jumbo ? Then whence comes my pain ?  
I am in love ? But yet when she's away  
'Tis true I seldom wish her back again.  
—Oh pity, pity him who in between  
Pursues with leaden foot the leaden mean !

## ISAAC BALL

PAINTING pictures  
Worth nothing at all  
In a dark cellar  
Sits Isaac Ball.

Cobwebs on his butter,  
Herrings in bed:  
Stout matted in the hair  
Of his poor cracked head

There he paints Men's Thoughts  
—Or so says he:  
For in that cellar  
It's too dark to see.

Isaac knew great men,  
Poets and peers:  
Treated crown-princes  
To stouts and beers;

Some still visit him;  
Pretend to buy  
His unpainted pictures—  
The Lord knows why.

His grey beard is woolly,  
Eyes brown and wild:

Sticky things, in his pocket,  
For anybody's child.

Someday he'll win fame,  
—So Isaac boasts,  
Lecturing half the night  
To long-legged ghosts.

Isaac was young once :  
At sixty-five  
Still seduces more girls  
Than any man alive.

## THE ROLLING SAINT

UNDER the crags of Teiriwch,  
The door-sills of the Sun,  
Where God has left the bony earth  
Just as it was begun;  
Where clouds sail past like argosies  
Breasting the crested hills  
With mainsail and foretopsail  
That the thin breeze fills;  
With ballast of round thunder,  
And anchored with the rain:  
With a long shadow sounding  
The deep, far plain:  
Where rocks are broken playthings  
By petulant gods hurled,  
And Heaven sits a-straddle  
The roof-ridge of the World:  
—Under the crags of Teiriwch  
Is a round pile of stones,  
Large stones, small stones,  
White as old bones;  
Some from high places  
Or from the lake's shore;  
And every man that passes  
Adds one more:  
The years it has been growing  
Verge on a hundred score.

For in the Cave of Teiriwch  
That scarce holds a sheep,  
Where plovers and rock-conies  
And wild things sleep,  
A woman lived for ninety years  
On bilberries and moss  
And lizards and small creeping things,  
And carved herself a cross:  
But wild hill robbers  
Found the ancient saint,  
And dragged her to the sunlight,  
Making no complaint.  
Too old was she for weeping,  
Too shrivelled and too dry:  
She crouched and mumle-mumled  
And mumled to the sky.  
No breath had she for wailing,  
Her cheeks were paper-thin:  
She was, for all her holiness,  
As ugly as sin.

They cramped her in a barrel  
(All but her bobbing head)  
And rolled her down from Teiriwch  
Until she was dead:  
They took her out, and buried her  
—Broken bits of bone  
And rags and skin—and over her  
Set one small stone:  
But if you pass her sepulchre  
And add not one thereto  
The ghost of that old murdered Saint

Will roll in front of you  
The whole night through.

The clouds sail past in argosies  
And cold drips the rain :  
The whole world is far and high  
Above the tilted plain.  
The silent mists float eerily,  
And I am here alone:  
Dare I pass the place by  
And cast not a stone?

OLD CAT CARE  
OUTSIDE THE COTTAGE

GREEN-EYED Care  
May prowl and glare  
And poke his snub, be-whiskered nose:  
But Door fits tight  
Against the Night:  
Through criss-cross cracks no evil goes.

Window is small:  
No room at all  
For Worry and Money, his shoulder-bones:  
Chimney is wide,  
But Smoke's inside  
And happy Smoke would smother his moans.

Be-whiskered Care  
May prowl out there:  
But I never heard  
He caught the Blue Bird.

## GLAUCOPIS

JOHN FANE DINGLE  
By Rumney Brook  
Shot a crop-eared owl,  
For pigeon mistook:

Caught her by the lax wing.  
—She, as she dies,  
Thrills his warm soul through  
With her deep eyes.

Corpse-eyes are eerie:  
Tiger-eyes fierce:  
John Fane Dingle found  
Owl-eyes worse.

Owl-eyes on night-clouds,  
Constant as Fate:  
Owl-eyes in baby's face:  
On dish and plate:

Owl-eyes, without sound.  
—Pale of hue  
John died, of no complaint,  
With owl-eyes too.



## THE BROKEN WING

THERE was a man in love with grass:  
He shivered at a tree:  
Thrill of wing in briar-bushes  
Wildly at his heart pushes  
Like the first, faint hint  
A lover is let see.

If he but knew a wordless song  
As a bird he would sing;  
He took delight in slim rabbits,  
Watched their delicate habits,  
—Waited, by the briar-bush,  
That flutter of wooing.

*Why did he break that small wing ?*  
The sun looks hollowly:  
Mocking 's where the water goes;  
The breeze bitter in his nose:  
Mocking eyes wide burning  
—Lost, lost is he!

## THE SERMON

LIKE gript stick  
Still I sit:  
Eyes fixed on far small eyes,  
Full of it:  
On the old, broad face,  
The hung chin;  
Heavy arms, surplice  
Worn through and worn thin.  
Probe I the hid mind  
Under the gross flesh:  
Clutch at poetic words,  
Follow their mesh  
Scarce heaving breath.  
Clutch, marvel, wonder,  
Till the words end.

Stilled is the muttered thunder:  
The hard few people wake,  
Gather their books, and go.  
—Whether their hearts could break  
How can I know?



### *Passus III*



## LOVER FINDS SOMETHING OUT

As one may stand upon a river's bank  
Lustred with daisies and forget-me-not,  
And in a pool as clear as any tank  
Behold the naked fish, with purple shot,  
Coral of fin, and back as blue as lead,  
Dart here and there as if they were afraid,  
Or hang above the golden gravel-bed  
In rings of lovely light to view displayed;  
And then anon at ruffling of the wind  
The pool grows milky as a breathed glass,  
And nothing is to see, where all that was,  
But rippled water by the breezes dimmed:

So have I often stood, as by a brim,  
In girls' clear minds to watch the fishes swim;  
Which bubble to their eyes, or dive into places  
Deep, yet visible still 'neath crystal faces:  
Then,—whether by mere airy blowing,  
Or (as Bethesda's pool) that winged one's unseen going  
Clouded is all the vision, naught to see  
But ripples and ruffles and trepidity:  
Ah! sad young man, this moral here you find:  
*Touch not her heart, if you would know her mind.*

## LOVER'S REPLY TO GOOD ADVICE

COULD you bid an acorn  
When in earth it heaves  
On Time's backward wing be borne  
To forgotten leaves:  
Could you quiet Noah's Flood  
To an essence rare,  
Or bid the roaring wind  
Confine in his lair:

Could round iron shell  
When the spark was in it  
Hold gun-powder so well  
That it never split:  
Had you reins for the sun,  
And curb, and spur,  
Held you God in a net  
So He might not stir:

Then might you take this thing,  
Then strangle it, kill:  
By weighing, considering,  
Conform it to will:  
As man denied his Christ  
Deny it, mock, betray—  
But being Seed, Wind, God,  
It bears all away.

## LAMENT FOR GAZA

You who listen, pity  
Gaza, this poor city;  
For now the roof rocks,  
And the blind god's hands  
Grove at the pillars where he stands:  
While Gaza mocks,  
While Gaza mocks.



## MOONSTRUCK

COLD shone the moon, with noise  
The night went by.  
Trees uttered things of woe:  
Bent grass dared not grow:

Ah! desperate man with haggard eyes  
And hands that fence away the skies  
On rock and briar stumbling,  
Is it fear of the storm's rumbling,  
Of the hissing cold rain,  
Or lightning's tragic pain  
Drives you so madly?  
See, see the patient moon;  
How she her course keeps  
Through cloudy shallows and across black deeps,  
Now gone, now shines soon:  
Where's cause for fear?

" I shudder and shudder  
At her bright light:  
I fear, I fear  
That she her fixt course follows  
So still and white  
Through deeps and shallows  
With never a tremor:  
Naught shall disturb her.  
I fear, I fear

What they may be  
That secretly bind her :  
What hand holds the reins  
Of those sightless forces  
That govern her courses.  
Is it Setebos  
Who deals in her command ?  
Or that unseen Night-Comer  
With tender curst hand ?  
—I shudder, and shudder.”

Poor storm-wisp, wander !  
Wind shall not hurt thee,  
Rain not appal thee,  
Lightning not blast thee ;  
Thou art worn so frail  
Only the moonlight pale  
To an ash shall burn thee,  
To an invisible Pain.

## Æ N I G M A

How can I tell it?  
I saw a thing  
That I did not find strange  
In my visioning.

A flawless tall mirror,  
Glass dim and green;  
And a tall, dim figure  
There was between:

Pale, so pale her face  
As veils of thin water;  
And her eyes water-pale,  
And the moonlight on her:

And she was dying, dying;  
She combed her long hair,  
And the crimson blood ran  
In the fine gold there.

She was dying, dying.  
And in her perfect eye  
No terror lurked, nor pity  
That she should so die.

## THE BIRD

SIDELONG the Bird ran,  
Hard-eyed on the turned mould:  
Was door and window wide?  
—Then Heart grew kettle-cold.

Might no wind-suckt curtain  
Dim that travelling Eye?  
Could Door's thick benediction  
Deafen, if he should cry?

Sidelong the Bird crept  
Into the stark door:  
His yellow, lidless eye!  
Foot chill to the stone floor!

Then Smoke, that slender baby,  
To Hearth's white Niobe-breast  
Sank trembling—dead. Oh Bird,  
Bird, spare the rest!

He has bidden bats to flit  
In Window's wide mouth:  
Starlings to tumble, and mock  
Poor Pot's old rusty drouth:

And a wet canker, nip  
Those round-breasted stones  
That I hugged to strong walls  
With the love of my strained bones.

He bad lank Spider run,  
    Grow busy, web me out  
With dusty trespass stretcht  
    From mantel to kettle-spout.

Door, Window, Rafter, Chimney,  
    Grow silent, die:  
All are dead: all moulder:  
    Sole banished mourner I.

See how the Past rustles  
    Stirring to life again . . .  
Three whole years left I lockt  
    Behind that window-pane.

## F E L O D E S E

If I were stone dead and buried under,  
Is there a part of me would still wander,  
Shiver, mourn, and cry Alack,  
With no body to its back?

When brain grew mealy, turned to dust,  
Would lissom Mind, too, suffer rust?  
Immortal Soul grow imbecile,  
Having no brain to think and feel?

—Or grant it be as priests say,  
And growth come on my death-day:  
Suppose Growth came: would Certainty?  
Or would Mind still a quester be,

Frame deeper mysteries, not find them out,  
And wander in a larger doubt?  
—Alas! If to mind's petty stir  
Death prove so poor a silencer:

Though veins when emptied a few hours  
Of this hot blood, might suckle flowers:  
From spiritual flames that scorch me  
Never, never were I free!

Then back, Death, till I call thee!  
Hast come too soon!  
—Thou silly worm, gnaw not  
Yet thine intricate cocoon.



## *Passus IV*





LINES  
WRITTEN UPON FIRST OBSERVING  
AN ELEPHANT DEVoured  
BY A ROC

FROM Iffley, young and delicate mists  
Lead the blind Thames to Abingdon,  
Uncertain-footed through the meadows  
Where the water-lily grows.

And there one glittering day in June  
Drifted my slim and brown canoe:  
Between cows munching, and the hum  
Of driving midges, and the tune  
Of larks and grass-hid linnets, you  
Would scarce believe that to those fields  
Could Silence ever come.

From Bagley Hills a little breeze  
With no more motion than the scent  
Of limes at evening, whispered in the trees,  
That answering, never stirred  
—Save to the dancing of some bird:  
And never a hair-bell bent:  
The tiny rumbling of the mole  
Answered the treading of the lark,  
And circling ripples showed the vole  
On oarage of swift feet embark.

I saw a hare in idleness  
Yawning and stretching in the sun:  
I saw a beetle in the cress  
Tangled, his voyage scarce begun:  
And where—pink tongue, and tusks agleam—  
In yellow meadows by the stream  
The lovely elephants made play,  
I saw the fire-winged king-fisher  
Like light in light dispread, appear  
And bear a bream away.

Hour of formless musing in the scents  
Of sunny grasses! Hour of indolence!  
—Far, where the Cotswolds wavered in the haze,  
Far in the west, a slow, soundless thudding,  
The minute-slow throbbing of a huge wing:  
And then a murmurous stirring of the trees  
As the spent puff passed, and left no breeze,  
And passed again over, louder and nearer,  
And the thunderous winging struck louder, clearer:

By field and narrowing lawn  
Like chaff the silly herd scatter,  
Dizzy chaff far blown  
By sudden breath of terror:  
Only with mystic eyes agleam—  
Ears cocked—like aspen quivering  
The high-flung trunk—beside the stream  
Stands one doe, trumpeting.

Ah, the creak of heavy wing  
On the hard air leaning!

Ah, the crash of shattered air!  
Sky sags like trodden board,  
Sky groans like started thunder:  
The crumbled air upon the sward  
Falls glittering, trampled under  
By that massive heave of wing,  
By that Speed's enormous cleaving!  
No sight that for mortal eye,  
That jagged sunlight, bow-bent sky,  
That grey doe rapt in agony hence  
Too swift to stir the sense.

#### EPILOGUE

So the elastic universe  
Was readjusted, none the worse:  
The Bird, the Bird was gone:  
The warm sun shone,  
The patient vole  
Attained his hole,  
The indolent hare  
Sat up to stare,  
The beetle struggling in the cress  
—He struggled none the less.

#### *A Voice :*

Great Heaven I praise, that It hath made  
This sunny day, these peaceful fields:  
But deprecate the prank It played,  
With lovely Nature not content,  
On stupid, fool-fantastics bent:  
Why thus abuse the power It wields?

*Another Voice :*

But I rejoice: for I detest  
Mimetic Nature, at the best  
Forever playing one dull trick  
Of reproduction: now I see  
The old Darwinian Family Tree  
Has inspiration, shows some kick!

*A Third Voice :*

It's very clever, I admit,  
But cannot see the use of it.  
It's not Worth While.—What Cosmic Want  
Makes *Roc* devour *Elephant*?  
Heaven's too hasty. Let It wait  
Till It has something to create.

*A Fourth Voice :*

You're wrong: things are not what they seem,  
But all symbolic, as in dream.  
Did you observe, my friends—

*A Fifth Voice, interrupting :*

Yes, and in huge *Roc* we find  
Symbol of . . . what's on Heaven's mind.  
. . . What the *beast* means I cannot tell:  
But do discern a Conflict well—

*The Fourth Voice, continuing :*

—Did you observe, my friends, how stale  
That “sunny day”? And all the tale—

*Fifth Voice, interrupting again :*  
Yes, you can see that the Creator  
Is mountain-bred, and a plain-hater—

*Sixth Voice :*  
That He approves of Einstein—

*Seventh Voice :*  
That  
He likes a dog less than a cat,  
Canaries less than both—

*Eighth Voice :*  
I see  
But Symbol of Man's Mortality.

*Fourth Voice, paying no attention and continuing :*  
How stale  
That " sunny day " : and all the tale  
Of flower and beast and usual bird  
Before the miracle occurred ?  
By this event would Heaven impart  
Views on contemporary art,  
That some new wonder—plainly doth it show it—  
Shall disturb the indolent regurgitations of the nature-poet.

*Ninth Voice :*  
True, it was commonplace: but have at you!  
The miracle was imitative too!  
So Nature on her lively page  
Mocks at the decadence of the pseudo-revolutionary Georgian  
Age.

*Fourth Voice, yet again :*

Nay, we're both wrong: the symbols now are plain,  
With *bird*, and *elephant*, and *river* too:  
Ghost-eyes see not: but yet I do maintain  
That he was not alone in that canoe!

*Yet Another Voice, very sleepy and American :*

But all Creation, elephant and pea,  
Is still Creation, and the same to me:  
Why talk of symbols, seek for meanings hid?  
—Call it an Image, man, and let it be.

*So the elastic universe*

*Was readjusted, none the worse.*

## UNICORN MAD

The Coming  
of the Ice  
Age

WET-ARMED, sleet-footed,  
The mad witty gales  
Ruin wildly up the hills,  
Rocket up the dales:  
In their slippery arms  
Bushels of hail,  
They do their daft seeding  
Over hill, over dale:  
Smash their crooked furrows  
Through all things that grow:  
—Alas, that in that green tilthe  
Barren hail they sow!  
Is it World's End they bring,  
That the roaring pine  
And the fierce old thorn  
Lie down with the celandine?  
That the thunder-headed oaks  
Converse with the grass,  
And the kindly vine  
Lies with the Upas?

All things  
die

So the winds return: but frost  
Catches what the winds have lost,  
Blackens rock-hid moss,  
Curls the hardy bugloss:  
Feather-like, bird-like,  
The humorous snow



Spreads its tender down  
Over all things that grow:  
Under her cold care  
Eggs of cold are hatched there,  
Till the lion lies stark  
Beside the long-toed lark,  
And the tiny curled mice  
Shrivel like woodlice.

But immortal  
Unicorn  
cannot die

Pity, pity poor Unicorn  
That he cannot now die,  
Bow his neck,  
Close his eye,  
Lay his lovely horn low,  
Leave his body in the earth  
Where the brown roots go!  
Now he sees his heart's desire  
Scorched more fiercely than by fire,  
All the whole world dead,  
All the noisy earth dead,  
With his icicled eye:  
Wild he flings his glassy mane  
Till its bells chime again:  
Delicate monkeys nestled close  
In his long and waving hair  
Whimper in a mute despair,  
Feel the ice about their toes.  
Where each shadowy soul goes  
Who tells? Who knows?

Cold is brooding on the Earth:  
Cold has sealed the dripping rain:

Heavily the ice crawls  
Up the dead waterfalls,  
Grinds and shudders up the hill:  
Cold can madden, cold can kill,  
Cold has him by the brain:  
He has lived a million ages,  
He shall live a million more  
With his clear soul froze  
And a heart where frenzy rages.

His heart  
breaks

Pity, pity Unicorn  
That he cannot now die!  
Loud he whinnies forth his pain  
To the snow-winged wheeling Roc,  
Leaps four-footed in the air  
Till the roots of the water-springs  
Snap and shudder in the shock.  
Now he stands stock still:  
With quivering nostril snuffs the snow  
Where the palm was used to grow,  
Where he used to munch his fill ;  
Conjuring that he is young  
In forests half a league high,  
All his horn with grapes hung,  
Lotus tart to his tongue,  
Moonlight in his moist eye,  
And clear star-light, that kindles fires  
Of wild indefinite desires:  
—Pity, pity Unicorn  
That he cannot die!

Now he's Cassandra,  
Trumpeting aloud  
Calling aloud  
Things of fear  
With none to hear:  
Now lo he, far-driven  
By the flickering tooth  
Of lightning stung:  
And now that Jew  
Who creeps, hiding,  
That no hill may see  
No river guess or see  
To curse his misery.

Where the Phœnix makes his pyre  
Outcast in night he sniffs the fire,  
Watching with unseeing eyes  
How everlasting Phœnix dies:  
Where Cerberus on the leash leans  
And trebly rumbles forth his love  
Of Midnight stalking on the earth  
A hundred thousand feet above,  
Unicorn may not go by,  
Unicorn may not die:  
He has lived a million ages,  
He shall live a million more  
With his clear soul frore,  
And a heart where frenzy rages.

Only on a wild night  
When the winds run low

For fear of the glaring stars  
That hunt them all the night through,  
You may hear his hooves go,  
You may hear his wild spring  
Clean across the thorny lightning  
And the piled thunder too:  
You may hear the heartless chiming  
Of his ice-tongued mane  
Like a cold bell mocking  
Mocking, mocking human pain.

VISION  
I  
MEDITATIVE ODE

*Animus loq.*

THE cool bright fingers of the winter sun  
Shape the clear hills to beauty, where the breeze  
Coils his slow, shining side,  
    Basks in cold light at ease:  
Basks, till the feathered woods  
Sleep on their rocky nests, where hide  
Their tender broods  
Of naked saplings, voiceless every one.

Voiceless: for Silence treads her padded way:  
No sound, but sunbeam's gently weeping ray,  
—That, and worms sighing three full inches deep,  
—That, and fish singing in their winter sleep  
To charm away the frost:  
And yet, to my sprite ear  
Across these earthy noises ringing clear  
As music up the wind, there come sad tones  
Unsounded: voices: melancholy  
Harmonious: sounds, and bells, and melancholy  
More beautiful than stones  
Or cry of mountains in the fearful moonlight lost.

Whence do they come?  
I cannot tell.  
Where do they dwell?  
I do not say,  
For at the door doth Vision stand  
With burning coal in her left hand  
To seal the lips. In every way  
Three-headed Vision lies across the gate,  
Darting this way and that.

Naked of words alone we pass:  
We hang our names upon a tree,  
Pile epithets upon the grass  
In useless heaps: our restless verbs  
We chain—they stalk uneasy.  
Naked of words we enter in  
Where formless beauties walk in threes,  
And soundless music stirs no trees,  
And thoughtless knowledge bursts no mind,  
And uneyed senses thin as wind  
Swim on the darkness with no fin,  
No light wing-fall;  
And speechless Joy in Sorrow's arms  
Engenders Nothing: and the hours  
Flatten, and shine like pigments on the wall.

Naked we passed the door;  
Naked return  
Beauties wreathless of all Name,  
And with no hue of shame:  
Like unicorns for joy  
We leap: we burn, we burn

Like eyes grown large as stars . . .  
Then the cold breath of matter stirs  
And joy falls steep as tears:  
Then ecstasy lies still,  
Soul shudders, sprite grows chill  
For shelter of a word,  
Till I fling *Richard* round my shoulders, gird  
*Hughes* decently across my loins.

Others I see on that dun plain  
Gaze with memorial eyes  
Brother, was yours this pain?  
Come: in ironic idleness, let's play  
With words as children do with bricks:  
That one's a Loveliness, that a Melody,  
(Rough, unlovely, unmelodious!)  
Let's sit in the sand  
And recall our Giocondas with round sea-pebbles.  
Three sticks, and some green moss: there's the Greek Fleet!  
A swan's feather, dog-rose petal, wisp of yellow metal  
Found in the mud: there's Helen for you!  
It's true, children? Say you see it, or I'll scratch your eyes out  
And then my own!—You see it?  
Fools! That's not Helen! Not the ships she launched!  
Only my sticks and mud. I'll grind it up,  
Such pain is on me: fling the husky words  
For swine to feed on.

Listen, children, I will tell  
A tale. I am a king—queen—priest—god:  
I was touched by the most ethereal fingers  
Of an unbelievable Loveliness.

Had she a name? Well, if she had a name, you'd laugh to hear  
it:

Why should she have a name?

Perhaps it's in that pile somewhere: but I can't reach it.

The frozen hills reflect the winter sun  
Unshivering: never a breeze stirs,  
Never a tree whispers;  
Head aches, and the veins run  
Slow, unheeded.—Oh, to be free  
Of formless beauty! To make a jewelry,  
To write with sweet meticulous ease  
Of barn-door fowl, pattering chestnut:  
Or conjure scent of lime-flowers on the breeze:  
Or tell what Irony hid in a shepherd's hut,  
What Passion solved itself in the pond's ooze:  
So, to be saved: to be no soul forlorn,  
But without soul to lose:  
To win some ease:  
Yet, sitting, and musing, there is something  
Grows in my ribs with the terrible force of an acorn,  
The visible speed of lightning:  
And he is a god,  
And with finger and thumb  
Has burst my heart like a pod of peas.



## II

### ECSTATIC ODE

(The poet is one for whom the visible world exists.—GAUTIER.)

*Corpus loq.*

Low stooped the oaks, like eagles  
With feathers of green glass.  
I saw the coloured sunset  
Out of the flowers pass:  
The heavenly mask was blushed with colour:  
Greyness possessed the grass.

I saw intoxicant Vision  
Gallop like a hare  
In a fine linear frenzy:  
I saw vast beauties there  
Curvet on feathered toe;  
Thin fell the light, and rare.

What wild fury filled that hare!  
His blazing eye! Electric fur!  
The fearful flashing of his paws!  
The patting of his sparkling claws!  
—Lo, the immortal shadow in me,  
That pale incubus the Soul,  
Faints and fades, and I am free:  
Saved are my five senses whole.  
Got when God with Matter wenched,  
*Nothing* deep in *Thing* entrenched,

Now stripped of his material vest  
See the phantom dispossessed :  
Whipt with cords of smell and heat,  
Lashed with blows of sound and weight,  
Before the drumming of those feet,  
Before those eyes of flashing light,  
Scourged with the scorpions of sight  
Flees the viewless parasite.

That fearful hare  
With fur of bright glass,  
With his bare leaping,  
His steps of fine brass,  
His hinder feet thudding  
And mewing like a bell  
By his almighty movement  
Possesses World as well :  
Sound and Colour sing together  
Witness to the shapely earth :  
The caterpillar with the weather  
Shares his mad, ecstatic mirth :  
Running water to the hour  
Sings his tones : and every flower  
Flies from tree to tree.  
*Now* I have Vision, now I see  
The sloping of material Shape :  
The curving air : the dagger-thrust  
Of light, its million-way riposte :  
The spraying fountains of the wind  
That sparkle veils of musk behind :  
The solid hills, their brilliant faces  
Spread like nets on living Graces :

Tilted plains; the sky's leaning:  
Bellied clouds' abrupt careening:  
Trees that like spindles rise to sight  
Wound in threads of knotted light:  
Flowers drowned in suffused blue  
That their delicate bodies show through.

I saw the World's arches,  
The spreading roots of light,  
The high wordy pillars  
That hold all upright,  
The deep verbal fundament  
Whereon rests sure  
The world on thoughtful vaulting,  
Interlocked, secure.

And I saw Vision  
Grow suddenly still,  
So that nothing was moving,  
Had moved or ever will:  
I saw the limbs of Vision  
Outstretched in Form, where  
Intoxicant Vision lay couchant,  
Motionless as a hare.

The sunset fades; night falls anon;  
The stunted oaks put darkness on  
And plovers whistle. Once again  
I am mere bodied spirit, fain  
To muse on shapeless mysteries;  
To shut my eyes on trees.

## ON TIME

UNHURRIED as a snake I saw Time glide  
Out of the shape of his material frame:  
I, who am part of Time's material name,  
Saw that unhurried serpent quietly slide  
Through a strait crack in his material side  
Between a prince and a stone: flicker, and presently coil,  
A small bright worm about a stalk of fennel;  
While light stood still as spar, and smell  
Spread like a fan, sound hung festooned, and toil  
Rose balanced and patterned like a storyed palace  
Whose wild tons grapple in immovable grace;  
While laughter sat on a rustic seat with tears  
And watched the corn-sheaves lean across the plough:  
Ah! then what wind across the nodding years!  
What ecstasies upon the bough  
Sang, like a fountain to its peers:  
And in the meadows what deep-rooted men  
Flowered their lovely faces in the grass,  
Where death, like a butterfly of dark-coloured glass,  
Flitted and sipped, and sipped again!

## WHEN SHALL I SEE GOLD?

### *After the Aztec*

SWEETLY sang those bright plumed birds the flowers  
To the half-ripe corn in the fields:

“ Why do you disguise yourself, drinker of darkness?

“ Put on your golden robes.”

(Beautiful was the song of those bright feathered ones  
In the ruddy twilight of the cornfield.)

“ Now has the shining water of heaven descended,

“ And bright-eyed Drought has rasped on his belly.

“ The cypress tree has become a jewelled feather.

“ There came little snakes of water, wriggling in the dust:

“ Then pools bright as peacock-eyes.”

Beautiful was the song of those bright feathered ones.

But the corn cried, uncertain:

“ I have come to the place where the roads meet.

“ Where shall I go? Which way shall I now take?

“ It may be that I shall go hence and perish.

“ My heart is all green jade:

“ When shall I see gold? ”

## TRAVEL - P I E C E

I HAVE seen lightning walking upon the water,  
While thunder shook my head like a sieve of corn :  
I have felt cold-handed Winter touch me in the dark,  
And Atlas-like have borne the burning weighty sun.

I have seen mountains and forests and beautiful cities  
Growing empty as a deserted garden :  
Mountains, and broken castles : desolate forests,  
Where by a hundred paths  
The singing Danube giddies through the plain :  
I have felt by night its pulse on the boat's shell,  
While fishes leapt like hoops in the dim light :  
Seen sunrise delicately tread the uneven water.

Then for a while I sat in stranger places,  
Dicing with Hunger to pass away the time ;  
I cut my fingers on the reins of State,  
I knew the wicked eye of half-drawn steel  
Outstare my own, and reached my hand for help  
To my sole comrade, hidden-footed Fear.  
So came at length to climb on alien hills,  
Where pine trees sang like the fifty-fluted sea,  
And Snow let down her hair among the crocuses ;  
Where I saw men upon that roof of the world  
Battle like cats, and utter their terrible notes.


I have walked with the sun shut into my tight head,  
And my hands jewelled with flies till my hands bled,  
At noon with bared feet in the hot sand;  
The span-deep forest sand, where cedars stretch for ever,  
And orchids suck weak breath over coloured swamp-water.  
Where hot cicadas trill and bright bird never sings  
I have seen the glassy wind warp in the hot sun:  
The beautiful curved wind where the locusts tread:  
Seen leaves of bushes like myriad green eyes,  
And big butterflies like heavy voiceless birds.  
And in mid-ocean I have seen green tigers  
Endlessly burst through pale dense leaves of fog:  
Deep in the under-parts of a ship have seen  
Men, the innumerable nations of the world,  
Like lights, dancing: looked in strange flecked eyes.

I know the prick of turf, the scent of warm trees,  
The taste of cheese, the sound of an old clock,  
A fire of green ash logs in a stone house,  
The lovely cooling touch of driven rain,  
The perfect unrepeatable shape of the Welsh hills.  
—But I have seen smooth familiar things  
So thorny grow with criss-cross memories,  
It pained to touch them.

Once, when a boy, I saw an old man die  
So slowly scarce you knew which way the battle went  
Till Pallor came on his cold horse  
With certain rumour of defeat:  
And the next day I saw men leap from life  
Like salmon leap a weir.  
At times, I have got drunk on brimming eyes;

Wrestled alone with him who comes by night,  
And with a drop of scalding oil have lost him:  
At times, fused night with day in fervent thinking  
Till the skull sweated;  
Or tumbled with rhythms on a pile of hay  
For half a honey-suckled summer.

But all these things I don't mistake for living,  
Nor bombast about them for creative writing,  
—Romantics, largely spun from my own stomach,  
Samples snipped from an enormous fabric:  
Though greatly moving me—part of my substance.  
Now, coming to manhood, I know I have plunged no deeper  
Into thought or doing than a kitten  
Trying to dare to pat an electric fan.  
And like that kitten, most I do is prompted  
By uneasy twitchings in my tail's tip.  
Surely it's now high time that something happened,  
Something snapped somewhere, and I entered in;  
—Ceased to be like the man who painted in the dark,  
Then called for a light to see what he had painted?







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